NOW NOW, APPEAR! YOU KAKERA OF THE IMAGININGS FROM THE FUTURE!
ALL OSTENTATION, ALL FANTASY, ALL OF THIS CHILDISH TOMFOOLERY OF A GAME, IS THERE A BETTER WAY THAN DEVOURING IT?
AHA HA HA!
I'M SOOORRY, BATTLER -KUUUN!

THE FUTURE WISHES FOR A TRAGEDY ON THIS ISLAND!
NOBODY WOULD EVER IMAGINE SOMETHING LIKE AN ACCIDENT WHILE YOU WERE HAVING A FUN PAAAARTY!
BUT THAT IS RESPONSIBILITY OF BEATO HERSELF, WHO CREATED A CATBOX THAT ALLOWS FOR ENDLESS IMAGININGS WHILE STRUGGLING TO REVEAL THE TRUE CIRCUMSTANCES!
AND OF COURSE IT IS DUE TO ALL OF YOUR SINS, FOR LIVING LIVES THAT LEFT NO OTHER CHOICE THAN TO DOUBT YOU ALL.
ANGE NO LONGER NEEDS ANYTHING BUT ONE SIMPLE TRUTH!
SO IS THERE EVER A BETTER WAY THAN GOBBLING UP THIS CHEWING-GUM LIKE GAME AND RETURNING IT TO NOTHING?!

CHAPTER 17: THE SCRATCHMARKS OF THE BLACK CAT (2)

...HERE THEY COME.

...MADAM
I RESPECTFULLY OFFER TO SEAL THIS WINDOW!
CORNELIA!
GERTRUDE, SEAL THE OTHER WINDOWS, NOW!
UNDERSTOOD.

!!
AH ...
AAA AAAH!
WE WERE TOO SLOW IN SEALING THEM

EVERY-ONE, TO THE 2ND FLOOR!
WE WILL CREATE A BARRIER AT THE STAIRS!
GRRR...
MILADY, HURRY!
SHIT... THE PARTY HALL...
LADY LAMBDA-DELTA!
OH MY, WHAT A HORRIBLE DEVELOP-MENT ☆

BOREDOM IS POISON FOR A WITCH, SO THE CLIMAX OF A GAME JUST HAS TO BE LIKE THIS!
NO... NO WAY!
LADY BERN-KASTEL DID...
SHE PLANNED THAT FROM THE START...
IT'S SO BERN! SHE'S STIRRING IT UP WELL!

I LIKE GAMES I CAN DEFINITELY WIN.
SHE'S NOT SATISFIED UNTIL SHE DRAGS ALL THE GUTS OF YOUR GAME OUT, SQUISHES THEM AND THROWS THEM OUT ON GARBAGE DAY
BUT SHE IS SO TERRI-CIOUS!
I WAS TOTALLY SATISFIED BY HAVING FUN WITH BERN ON YOUR GAMEBOARD.
BUT THAT'S WHY I LOVE MY BERN SO MUCH!
THERE SEEMS NO OTHER WAY THAN LETTING THE GOATS EAT IT UP.
BUT TO A BERN WHO LOVES SPICY STUFF AND ANGE WHO LAPS UP HARDSHIP, YOUR GAME JUST DIDN'T SUIT THEIR TASTEBUDS.
SORRY BATTLER, IT'S NOT THAT I DISLIKE SWEET STUFF LIKE YOU DID.

YOU ARE A HIGHER WITCH, AREN'T YOU? CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING?!
IF I GET SWALLOWED UP BY NOTHINGNESS I DIE.
SORRY, BUT I'M SATISFIED BEING A SPECTATOR
MORE THAN EVER YOU ARE AN INVITED SPECTATOR AND NOT A PIECE OF THIS BOARD.
IT'S A PITY WE COULDN'T GET YOUR HELP THOUGH.
TRUE, TRUE.
I WILL OBSERVE WHO WINS, BERN OR YOU GUYS.
SHIT!
I HATE WHEN SHE'S HAVING FUN...
EVERY-ONE, HURRY!
TO THE 3RD FLOOR, TO GRANDPA'S ROOM! DON'T GET SEPARATED!!

ALI!
MARIA!

LADY MARIA, THIS WAY!
GERTRUDE IS ALREADY TRYING, BUT SHE NEEDS MORE TIME!
DLANOR! SET UP THE BARRIER AT THE STAIRS!
IF YOU DO NOT [illegible] THEM HALT ...
WHAT A VILE BEAST TO ATTACK LADY MARIA!
DAMN THAT FEELS ICKY PASSING THROUGH SOMETHING SO BLOCK-HEADED!

SO, WHAT NOW.
IT SEEMS AS IF OUR TIME OF SERVICE HAS ARRIVED.
SEVEN SISTERS OF PURGA-TORY, TO ME!
TONIGHT YOU SHALL FEAST AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE!
CAN I COUNT ON YOU, RONOVE? SISTERS?
Yes Your Majesty
FOR FIGHTING SCENES ARE OUR DOMAIN!
CHIESTER FORCE, CLOSE RANGE BATTLE. PREPARE!
AY, SIR!

I, ELANOR A. KNOX WILL BE YOUR OPPONENT!
I WILL ASSIST YOU!
LION, YOU ALSO GO UPSTAIRS!!
BU ... BUT WILL !!
LEAVE THIS TO US AND GO UPSTAIRS!
YOUR DUTY IS TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY!

I... UNDER-STAND...
EVERY-BODY... BE SAFE!

THIS IS THE DOMAIN OF OUR GREAT AND NOBLE WITCH BEATRICE.
FOR THOSE OF YOU WITH POOR MANNERS, YOU WILL NOT RETURN
BATTLER, THE HUMANS HAVE TAKEN REFUGE IN THE STUDY!
I SEE!
RONOVE IS HOLDING THEM BACK DOWNSTAIRS RIGHT NOW!
GAAP!
BATTLER, RICE!

CAN YOU COME WITH ME? I THINK YOU SHOULD SEE THIS.
THE SKY ABOVE THE ISLAND?
WAAH ... THAT'S HIGH!
YEAH, BUT LOOK DOWN.
YOU SEE?

YOU WANNA TELL ME THAT THOSE SQUIRMING DROPS IN THE WAVES ARE ALL GOATS?!
THAT IS NO LONGER A WAVE, THAT'S AN OCEAN!!
THE FUTURE PEOPLE ARE QUITE SOMETHING, HOW MANY PEOPLE EXACTLY COOKED UP HOW MANY IDEAS OF TRAGEDIES THERE?
WHA....
WHAT IS THAT?
THEY ARE NOT LIKE US. THEY CAN'T PERCEIVE THE RED TRUTH.
THAT'S WHY, EVEN THOUGH THE TRUTH IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE SOMETHING QUITE SIMPLE, EVEN A CRAZY PLOT LIKE BERNKASTEL'S MIGHT DO.
THAT IS WHAT THEY KEEP THROWING AGAINST OUR CATBOX... IN ENDLESS NUMBERS ON TOP OF THAT!

WHAT IS THIS...DO THEY WANT TO SEE US END UP IN TRAGEDY THAT BAD?
THOUGH I HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOWING THE SEED FOR THAT...
WE DON'T EXACTLY HAVE TIME TO BABBLE RIGHT NOW ...
THEY ARE TRYING TO SWALLOW THE ISLAND ITSELF INTO NOTHINGNESS
THE SHAPE OF IT IS ALREADY CHANGING
GAAP, CAN YOU HELP US GET BACK INTO THE STUDY?
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...
OK
WITH NUMBERS LIKE THAT IT IS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME UNTIL WE ARE SWALLOWED UP WITH THE MANSION.

CAN'T YOU LOOK OUT WHERE YOU THROW US?
HM MM ...
JII-SAMA! I'M SORRY, WE DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO RUN.
AND IF THIS KEEPS GOING WE CAN'T HOLD OUR BASES MUCH LONGER.
BANG!
I SEE THAT.

OH, BEATRICE? IS THERE NO WAY TO ESCAPE THIS GAMEBOARD?
IMPOS-SIBLE.
THE OUTSIDE OF THE GAMEBOARD IS NOT MY DOMAIN.
YOU CAN'T STEP OUTSIDE UNLESS YOU ARE A HIGHER TIER WITCH LIKE LADY BERNKASTEL OR LAMBDADELTA.
THEN WHAT DO WE DO? IS THERE ANOTHER WAY?
.....THE GOLDEN LAND.

HMMM... THE GOLDEN LAND IS A VERY SACRED PLACE ON THIS GAMEBOARD.
IF WE CAN RUN THERE THAT IS THE ONLY PLACE.
IT'S DECIDED! WE WILL ALL TAKE REFUGE IN THE GOLDEN LAND!
WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO TO OPEN THE DOOR TO THERE?

TWO OF US HAVE TO REMAIN HERE.
THE DOOR CAN ONLY BE CLOSED BY TWO PEOPLE FROM THE OUTSIDE
BUT THERE IS ONE PROB-
I ONLY HAVE TO OPEN THE DOOR
.....
...THAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF ME AS THE DOMAIN LORD AND YOU.
IF IT'S US WE CAN ALSO DEFEND US.
DO IT, BEATO.
OKAY, I WILL.

.....!?
SORRY.
WHAT IS IT, BEATO?
NGH

... DAMN!
I SUPPOSE OPENING THE DOOR WILL TAKE A LOT LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED.
THAT ARMY OF GOATS SEEMS TO PUT OFF A HUGE AMOUNT OF ANTI-MAGIC TOXIN.
MY RIFLES ARE DEMANDING FOOD!
THEN WE WILL DEFEND THIS STUDY UNTIL THE TIME COMES!!
... UUNGH!
LEAVE THE PROTECTION TO ME
I WILL HAVE FUN BY SENDING THESE GOATS TO HELL!

I'M COUNTING ON YOU, KINZO... GAAP...

SPLENDID WORK.
THE NEXT ONE IS YOURS.

YOU BEAT THEM AND THEY STILL KEEP COMING!!
WHAT IS THEIR DEAL...
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT WELL AND NICE, BUT...
WITH THAT MANY THERE'S NO END!

THIS IS NO TIME TO STAND A ROUND CRYING!
WE ARE THE FURNITURE OF THE ENDLESS WITCH.
IF WE CAN'T COMPETE WITH ENDLESS, WHAT ARE WE?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
WHAT?
THEY ...
WHAT ARE THEY BABBLING WHILE STARING AT US?
CHANGE IN ENEMY FORMATION!!
UNITS WITH HIGHER BREAK-THROUGH POTENTIAL HAVE BEEN POSITIONED TO THE FRONT LINE!
HA...

SO WHAT!
LET'S GO EVERY-BODY!

...EH?!
...WHA...

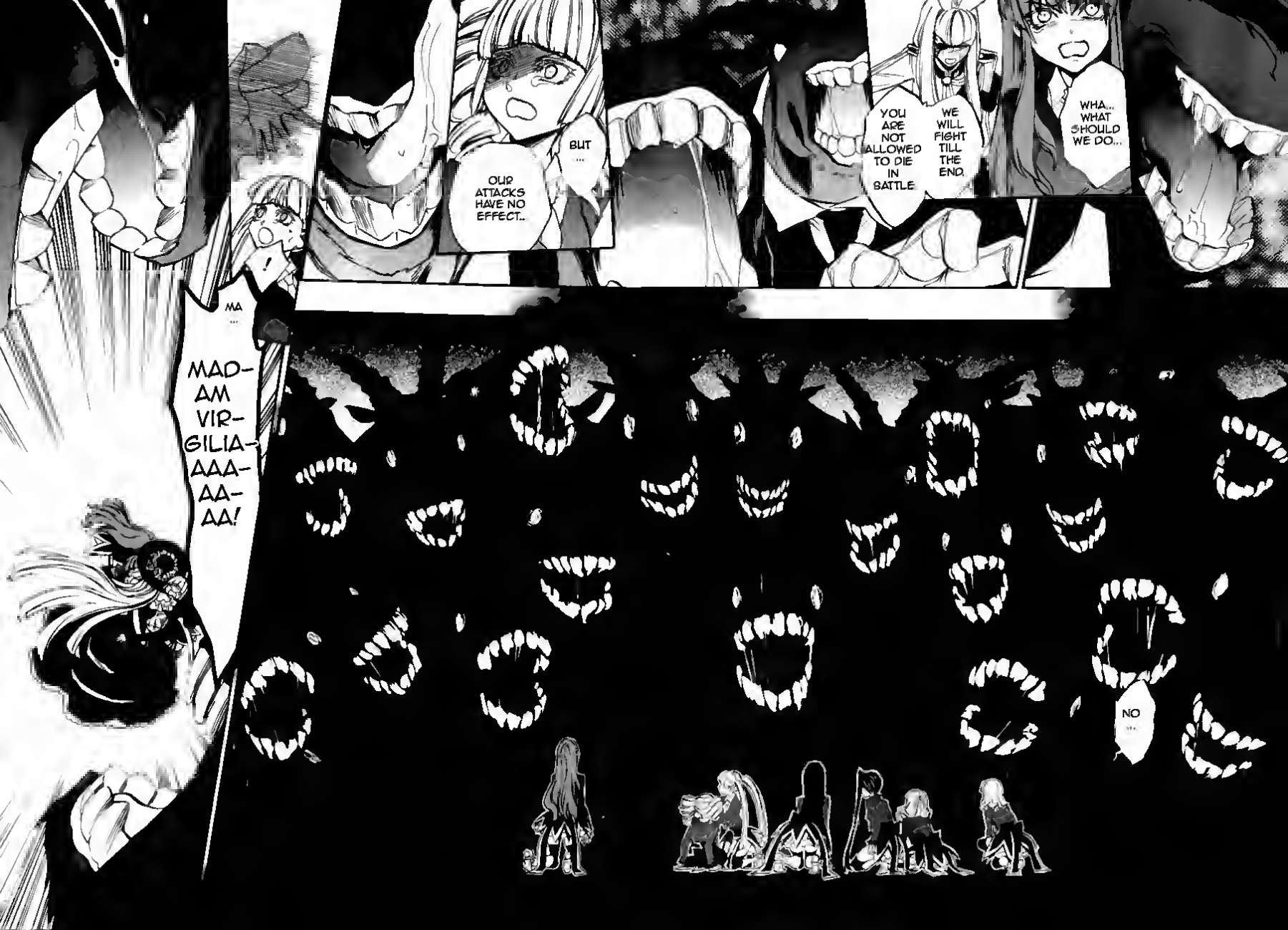
YOU GOATS! WE WILL TEACH YOU!!
PROTECT THE PURGA-TORY SQUAD!
WHY ...?!
IT....
IT'S INEF-FECTIVE?!

ALL THE FANTASY CHARACTERS...
ARE FICTI-TIOUS...
THE SISTERS OF PURGATORY... ARE PERSONI-FICATIONS OF THE RITUAL STAKES...
THEY ARE ACTUALLY PAPER-WEIGHTS... PAPER-WEIGHTS...
THE CHIESTER SISTERS ARE MODELED AFTER MARIA'S BUNNY DOLLS.
THEY ARE ACTUALLY BULLETS...

THE FANTASY CHARACTERS ARE ALL ILLUSION...
ALL OF THE CASE CAN BE EXPLAINED WITH MYSTERY!!
GULP
THAT IS...
MAGIC RESISTANCE ENDLESS NINE!
WHAT NOW?!
IT SEEMS LIKE THERE ARE A LOT WHO DENY MAGIC!
AND IF THEY DON'T ACCEPT IT?!

THEN MAGIC ATTACKS CANNOT HARM THEM IN ANY WAY!

RO-NOVE IS FICTION....
...WHAT...
HIS VESSEL IS GENJI... HE IS THE FANTASY FORM OF GENJI...
VIRGILIA'S VESSEL IS KUMASAWA... I DENY MAGIC, IT'S NONEXISTENT...
GER-TRUDE IS THE RECEIPT STUCK IN THE DOOR...
COR-NELIA IS THE DUCK-TAPE...
THEY ARE ALL, ALL FICTI-TIOUS...


WHA... WHAT SHOULD WE DO...
WE WILL FIGHT TILL THE END.
YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO DIE IN BATTLE
BUT ...
OUR ATTACKS HAVE NO EFFECT..
!
MA ...
MAD-AM VIR-GILIA-AAA-AA-AA!
NO ...

RO-
NO-
VE
...!!

...HUH.
NO EFFECT AT ALL?

EVEN IF MAGIC IS INEFFECTIVE, I RONOVE
THE TRUTH OF MY HOT-BLOODED DEEPEST LOYALTY WON'T WAVER
DO YOU THINK I WOULD STEEP SO LOW AS TO ABANDON WOMEN AND CHILDREN?
RONOVE IS A FANTASY...
FIC-TION ... IN-EXISTENT ...
MADAM, I WANT YOU TO ...
ES-CAPE ...!!
RONOVE, NO!

I, RONOVE ...
SOMEHOW GET ALL ROUSED UP WHEN A LADY IS IN A PINCH.
THAT'S MY BAD SIDE.
I WANT YOU TO ESCAPE UPSTAIRS.
NO, GET BEHIND THE BARRIER!

RO-
NOVE-
EEE
-SA
MAAA!!
RO
...

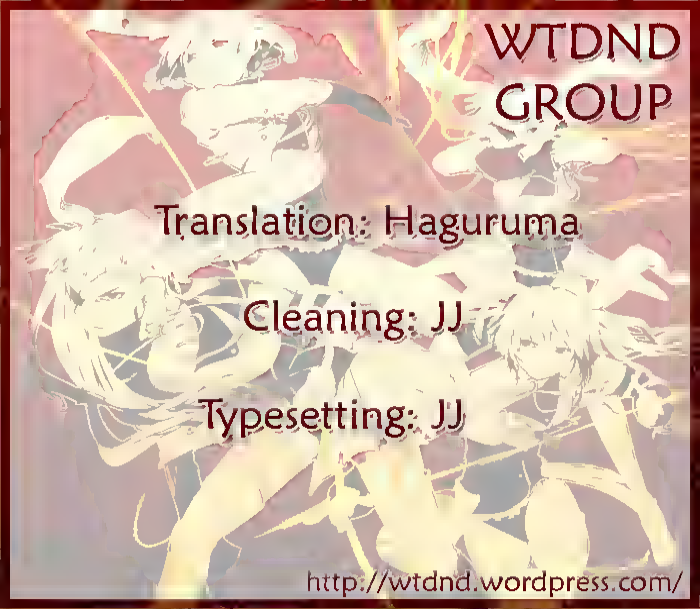
GN...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING CHIESTERS?! SHOOT!
IT'S NO USE! NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE SHOOT IT'S NO USE!
WE WON'T ACCEPT FANTASY...
WON'T ACCEPT...
IT CAN ALL BE EXPLAINED WITH A MYSTERY
THE EXIST-ENCE OF FANTASY IS IMPOS-SIBLE
JUST LET IT BE ALL MYSTERY!

RO-
NO-
VE
-SA-
MA...!!
IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE SOME TIME WHEN YOU ABSENT-MINDEDLY CHEW ME TO BITS.
I JUST THINK THAT I WILL HAVE A LOT OF SMALL BONES IN ME.

WHO EXACTLY DID SAY THAT?
"MYSTERY" IS IT...
PLANOR'S SWORD IS GOING THROUGH?!
I SEE!

IF THE OPPONENT CLAIMS IT TO BE A MYSTERY ...
THE WEDGES OF MYSTERY ...
KNOX'S 10 COMMANDMENTS AND VAN DINE'S 20 RULES ARE EFFECTIVE!!
SO FANTASY CANNOT POSSIBLY EXIST...
YOU UNDERSTAND AT LEAST THAT MUCH.
SO YOU LOT HAVE ...
PREPARED AN ANSWER, HAVEN'T YOU?!

I WANNA HEAR IT, YOUR REASONING ON BEATRICE'S GAME.
I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL YOUR THEORIES!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GROUP
Translation: Haguruma
Cleaning: JJ
Typesetting: JJ
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